



# Criteria for GCE AS and A-level Qualifications



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# The criteria

## Introduction

1. The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of all GCE AS and A levels.
2. GCE AS and A-level criteria were previously published within *The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004).

## Content

### Titling

3. The titles of GCE AS and A levels must:
  - 3.1 where relevant subject criteria exist, correspond to the titles used in the relevant subject criteria published by the regulators;
  - 3.2 where relevant subject criteria do not exist, be sufficiently broad to cover different specifications in the same subject area.

### Subject matter

4. The subject matter of GCE AS and A levels must:
  - 4.1 state which aspects/options must be taken to meet the requirements of the respective countries, where statutory requirements differ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
  - 4.2 include optional units only if these:
    - 4.2.1 demand additional skills, knowledge and/or understanding;
    - 4.2.2 extend the core content within a specialist context and/or introduce links to another subject area;
  - 4.3 identify opportunities to generate evidence for the assessment of the skills of improving own learning and performance, problem solving and working with others;
  - 4.4 for AS qualifications:

- 4.4.1 provide an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding to match the first half of a full A-level course of study;
- 4.4.2 enable candidates to be assessed, normally by means of two assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level;
- 4.4.3 include assessment units that will be weighted within the range of 15–35 per cent of the full A level;
- 4.4.4 for double-award specifications, enable candidates to be assessed, normally by means of four assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A-level double award;
- 4.5 for A2 assessments that will be combined with AS assessments to lead to the award of a full A level:
  - 4.5.1 provide an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding to match the second half of a full A-level course of study;
  - 4.5.2 enable candidates to be assessed, normally by means of two assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level;
  - 4.5.3 include assessment units that will be weighted within the range of 15–35 per cent of the full A level;
  - 4.5.4 enable candidates undertaking double-award specifications to be assessed by means of four assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A-level double award.

## **Assessment**

- 5. The assessment arrangements for GCEs must:
  - 5.1 offer candidates the opportunity to be assessed either (in stages) during the course or at the end of the course;
  - 5.2 normally include only one component of assessment (internal assessment may involve more than one task, while external

- assessment may, for example, involve listening, reading and writing aspects. In each case, there will be one awarding process per unit);
- 5.3 not exceed a maximum examining time for external assessments of three hours at AS and four hours at A2, unless otherwise agreed in the subject criteria;
  - 5.4 set out the relationship between the assessment objectives and the assessment components;
  - 5.5 show the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective (or group of assessment objectives) and to each assessment unit;
  - 5.6 show which assessment objective(s) will include the assessment of written communication;
  - 5.7 include sufficient synoptic assessment at A2 to test the candidates' understanding of the connections between the different elements of the subject and their holistic understanding of the subject;
  - 5.8 include A2 assessments that provide appropriate demand and:
    - ☐ use a variety of stems in questions
    - ☐ ensure connectivity between sections of questions
    - ☐ use a wide range of question types and tasks to address different skills;
  - 5.9 be comparable for all candidates, even where there are optional assessment units or optional examination questions;
  - 5.10 include extended writing in all subjects (except where agreed with the regulators as inappropriate) and must be in accordance with the regulations that apply to the quality of written communication;
  - 5.11 allow resits of an assessment unit with the best result counting towards the qualification;
  - 5.12 use internal assessment only where it is the soundest method of assessing specific skills within the assessment objectives, and in accordance with the regulations.

## **Reporting**

6. There must be arrangements for grading and reporting of GCEs so that:
  - 6.1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at AS level is reported on a five-grade scale from A to E, where A is the highest grade;
  - 6.2 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at A level is reported on a six-grade scale from A\* to E, where A\* is the highest grade;
  - 6.3 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at AS or A level is reported as Unclassified or U;
  - 6.4 the grades awarded match performance descriptions published by the regulators, where these do not exist, match the performance descriptions for AS and A2 levels at the grade boundaries of A and B, and E and U;
  - 6.5 the AS double award is reported on the following grading scale: AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE;
  - 6.6 the A-level double award is reported on the following grading scale: A\*A\*, A\*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE.

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